

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

011241Z Jul 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 004149

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/01/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GOI](#) [INTERNAL](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI LEFT-WING LEADERS UNCERTAIN OF WHAT WILL FOLLOW DISENGAGEMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary and Comment: In a June 29 dinner hosted by the Ambassador, leaders of the Labor and Yahad-Meretz parties could not agree on what steps the GOI will -- or even should -- take following disengagement. The group had divergent views on whether and to what degree Prime Minister Sharon would continue the disengagement process, although all of their scenarios included Sharon in a key decision-making role. The group did agree that the government coalition is likely to change by the end of the year. The significance of the discussion was that it once again demonstrated the difficulty in predicting post-disengagement scenarios, even when the analysts are experienced Israeli politicians who generally share similar views and party affiliations. Vice Premier and Labor Chairman Shimon Peres, Minister and Labor leader Haim Ramon, Yahad-Meretz Chairman Yossi Beilin, Ambassador Avi Gil, Shimon Center Director Ron Pundak and others participated in the discussion. End Summary and Comment.

Lack of Agreement on GOI Steps Post-Disengagement

2. (C) The Ambassador asked what steps the GOI will take following disengagement. Peres, who has told several CoDels that "disengagement first cannot mean disengagement last," conjectured that Sharon may decide to announce the withdrawal from additional West Bank settlements, but to retain all the major settlement blocks. Peres believed this policy would leave the Palestinians with control over 60-70 percent of the West Bank. Gil claimed that Sharon will drag the process out with a series of mini-disengagements, each one followed by a lengthy "time-out" to adjust to the new situation.

3. (C) Ramon urged "a second disengagement to avoid a third intifada," calling the occupation of Palestinian territory an existential threat to the existence of Israel. He advocated continued unilateral GOI steps coordinated -- when possible --- with the Palestinians. His suggestion is to continue disengagement from the West Bank, removing approximately 50,000 settlers while retaining the major settlement blocks, including Ariel. He maintained that disengagement from settlements outside the security fence would leave the Palestinians with approximately 93 percent of the West Bank. Ramon said that Sharon can pursue this course regardless of what he tells his constituents, because the Prime Minister can always claim that he was forced to act by international pressure.

Disagreement on Addressing Final Status Issues

4. (C) The Israeli leaders could not agree on whether the GOI should attempt to resolve final status issues following disengagement. Gil said he thought Sharon would offer a return to the road map in exchange for an end to terror attacks, a condition he believed the Palestinians are unlikely to be able to meet. Ramon rejected calls for a move to final settlement issues for two reasons, the lack of a Palestinian or Israeli partner capable of making tough decisions and what he believes is a clear lack of Israeli public support for addressing the Jerusalem and refugee issues. Ramon added that President Abbas is too weak to negotiate final status issues. Beilin, Gil and Pundak countered with claims that the intifada had increased the Israeli public's support for a move toward a final settlement, but that GOI leaders have not had the courage to take the necessary steps. They criticized Ramon's plan as capitulation to Sharon's "go-slow" approach.

Agreement that the GOI will Change After Disengagement

5. (C) The left-wing politicians all agreed that the outcome of the disengagement plan would influence the composition and leadership of the next coalition government. Peres noted that Sharon does not trust the Labor Party and is acutely

aware of the need to maintain two coalitions, one with the right wing of Likud and one with the United States. Ramon said that the Likud rebels are actively working to undermine the PM's power base in the party and predicted that Sharon will not be the Likud candidate in the next election. Ramon conjectured that Sharon, Peres and Shinui leader Tommy Lapid might agree to form a new coalition government after disengagement is complete.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website.

KURTZER